

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the

Executive

Held in the Small Hall (Carterton) - Carterton Community Centre at 2.00 pm on **Wednesday, 10 September 2025**

PRESENT

Councillors: Andy Graham, Duncan Enright, Lidia Arciszewska, Hugo Ashton, Rachel Crouch, Geoff Saul, Alaric Smith and Tim Sumner

Officers: Giles Hughes (Chief Executive Officer), Andrea McCaskie (Director of Governance), Phil Martin (Director of Place), Claire Locke (Interim Executive Director), Andrew Brown (Head of Democratic and Electoral Services), Anne Learmonth (Democratic Services Officer), Alison Borrett (Senior Performance Analyst), Melanie Dodd (Senior Biodiversity Officer), Kim Hudson (Principal Policy Officer), Hannah Kenyon (Climate Change Manager), Heather McCulloch (Community Wellbeing Manager), Mathew Taylor (Democratic Services Officer), Si Pocock-Cluley (Environmental Services and Waste Transformation Lead), Sam Stronach (Economic Development Manager) and Stuart Wilson (Leisure Contracts Lead)

Other Councillors in attendance: Julian Cooper, Phil Godfrey, Martin McBride, David Melvin, Rosie Pearson and Elizabeth Poskitt

372 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from, Councillor Andrew Prosser, Executive Member for Climate Change and Nature Recovery.

373 Declarations of Interest

9. Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule.

Councillor Duncan Enright, Declaration for Transparency, Councillor Duncan Enright, Deputy Leader, declared that he had undertaken work with The Community Communication Partnership (CCP). In this role Councillor Enright noted that he did not undertake any work in Oxfordshire and therefore this interest did not preclude him from taking part on the vote or discussion on any item on the agenda.

374 Minutes of Previous Meeting

There were no amendments to the minutes of the previous meeting held on 9 July 2025.

The minutes were proposed by Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council. Councillor Duncan Enright, Deputy Leader of the Council, seconded the proposal.

The proposal was voted on and approved unanimously.

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RESOLVED:

To approve the minutes of the previous meeting held on 9 July 2025.

375 Receipt of Announcements

Councillor Graham welcomed the public and Members to the Executive meeting. Councillor Graham reminded those in attendance that there was an engagement session on the Carterton Area following the meeting. This session was the first of a series of events and discussions on this topic. These sessions were about putting the views of the community first. Notes of the sessions would be made available for those unable to attend.

Councillor Tim Sumner, Executive Member for Leisure and Carterton Area Strategy, announced that £3.5m was to be invested in improvements at the district's leisure centres. The investment would lead to significant and noticeable improvements and modern high quality leisure centres. This money was for essential repairs and were needed to avoid the need for emergency works and unplanned closures. This work would also help to retain the value of the sites. More detail on this investment was to be presented at item 8 of the agenda.

Councillor Rachel Crouch, Executive Member for Stronger Healthy Communities, announced the appointment of a Council Youth Development Officer. The Officer was a qualified youth worker and had been in post for six months. In this time he had been visiting communities and identified six priority areas for his work.

Councillor Duncan Enright announced that the Shop Front Improvement Grant Scheme had been launched and was available for grants of up to £11k. The period for applications closed on Friday 19 September 2025.

376 Participation of the Public

There was no participation of the public.

377 Reports from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee had met on 3 September 2025 and made recommendations to the Executive in relation to agenda item 10 – Oxfordshire Local Area Energy Planning.

Councillor Graham advised that the Executive response to the Overview and Scrutiny Committees recommendations would be dealt with as part of item 10 on the agenda.

378 Matters raised by Audit and Governance Committee

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There had been no meeting of the Audit and Governance Committee since the last meeting of the Executive.

379 Leisure Planned Investment Programme

Councillor Tim Sumner, Executive Member for Leisure and Carterton Area Strategy, presented the item, the purpose of which was to present the forecast expenditure required to ensure the Council owned leisure facilities remained operationally effective and compliant with modern standards as well as improving the leisure services for residents into the future. A breakdown had been included to demonstrate the costs over a range of periods along with a summary of associated implications. It was intended that the report would allow Members to decide on the preferred Planned Investment Programme.

Councillor Sumner advised that:

- It was the Executive's wish to keep facilities open and well maintained for the benefit of residents of all ages and abilities.
- He was proud that the Council would be investing £3.5m in the face of closing and unsustainable facilities across the country.
- The investment was over a five-year period.
- It was noted that Executive Members had visited all facilities across the district to see first hand what works had been required and how the leisure offering could be improved.

Another Councillor in attendance stated that investment was important as there was competition for customers in this area.

Councillor Sumner proposed accepting the recommendations of the report.

Councillor Alaric Smith seconded the proposal and suggested that the investment tied in with the Asset Management Strategy which had looked at all council owned assets and allowed works to be planned more effectively.

This was voted on and approved unanimously.

RESOLVED:

That the Executive:

- I. Allocate funds in the Capital Programme for the delivery of a 5-year planned investment programme, as determined by the latest condition surveys conducted at all Council owned Leisure Facilities.

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2. Delegate authority to the Director of Place, in consultation with Executive member for Leisure and/or the Section 151 Officer to approve the project specific procurement of works and services directly, or via the Leisure Operator to deliver the programme of works over the agreed time period.

380 Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule

Councillor Hugo Ashton, Executive Member for Planning, introduced the item, the purpose of which was to consider the formal approval of the District Council's Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule following independent examination.

Councillor Ashton explained the process that had taken place for the schedule to reach this stage. This process had included consultation and independent examination. Minor amendments had been made to the schedule following examination, including a reduction in CIL for developments over 250 homes, otherwise it had been approved by the examiner. Councillor Ashton noted that one of the advantages of CIL was that it would apply to smaller developments that did not attract S106 contributions. CIL therefore allowed the cumulative impact of developments to be considered, with a proportion of the contribution being transferred to the host town or Parish Council. The next stage was for Council to approve the schedule on 1 October 2025. A proposed effective date for the schedule to come into effect on applications was 31 January 2026

Councillor Ashton proposed accepting the recommendations of the report.

Councillor Graham seconded the proposal and noted that CIL added a further layer of contributions from developers which would give local councils influence on what contributions were used for such as localised projects.

This was voted on and approved unanimously.

RESOLVED:

That the Executive:

1. Note the content and recommendations of the independent examiner's report attached at Annex A, including the modifications (EM1 and EM2) which have been recommended in respect of the CIL Charging Schedule attached at Annex B;
2. Recommend to Council that the Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule attached at Annex B be formally approved with an effective date of 31 January 2026 in accordance with Section 213 of the Planning Act 2008.
3. Recommend to Council that authority be delegated to the Head of Planning to further progress work on the draft CIL Implementation Plan in consultation with the Executive Member for Planning.

Oxfordshire Local Area Energy Planning

Councillor Hugo Ashton, Executive Member for Planning, introduced the item, the purpose of which was to seek approval to proceed to Phase 2 of the Oxfordshire Local Area Energy Planning (LAEP) programme and complete a districtwide local area energy plan.

Councillor Ashton stated that:

- Local area energy planning was a process that set out the pathway to a zero-carbon future.
- The Oxfordshire Leaders Joint Committee was supporting six Oxfordshire councils to work together to develop LAEPs.
- Some of the benefits of having a LAEP were that clear plans and projects to transition to zero-carbon could be set-out and local supply chain capacity and capability for projects could be created.
- Phase 1 of LAEP was ending and had identified where upgrades and flexibility solutions were needed to ensure homes, businesses and essential services had affordable and secure energy. Phase 2 would commence on approval by the Executive and would translate this analysis into district-level actions plans that would help councils prioritise projects.
- The LAEP was critical in delivering the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041 and would dovetail with the Infrastructure Delivery Strategy to help to identify constraints in the grid.
- The Executive were required to agree that acceptance criteria had been met in terms of key deliverables in Phase 1 and agree that there was sufficient officer resource to proceed to Phase 2.
- The report outlined the officer resource required to proceed to Phase 2, and could be seen in annexe B.
- The Overview and Scrutiny Committee had made three further recommendations to be included in the report. These recommendations had all been agreed by the Executive and would be included in a third recommendation.

Councillor Ashton proposed accepting the recommendations of the report, subject to the addition of a third recommendation that accepted the recommendations made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as set out in the supplement to the agenda.

Councillor Graham seconded the proposal.

This was voted on and approved unanimously.

RESOLVED:

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That the Executive:

1. Delegate authority to the Director of Place, in consultation with the Executive Member for Climate Action and Nature Recovery, to approve the remaining Phase 1 key deliverables of the Oxfordshire local area energy planning project programme.
2. Subject to the completion of Phase 1, agree to proceed to Phase 2 of the Oxfordshire local area energy planning project programme and the completion of a districtwide local area energy plan.
3. Agree the response to the Overview and Scrutiny Committees recommendations as set out in the supplement to the agenda.

382 West Oxfordshire District Council response to the draft Oxfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)

Councillor Lidia Arciszewska, Executive Member for Environment, introduced the item, the purpose of which was to consider the endorsement of the Oxfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for publication.

Councillor Arciszewska stated that:

- The LNRS had been prepared by Oxfordshire County Council in collaboration with all Oxfordshire districts.
- This was a huge project and had sought to define the value of existing biodiversity and identify what could be done to improve this value and connect valuable habitats.
- The outcome of the project was a series of maps that identified the areas of biodiversity and explored how to protect and connect them.
- This work was important as it would feed into planning policy and the development of the Local Plan to identify areas in which it would be suitable to build and those which needed to be protected.
- In endorsing the publication of the strategy, the Council was demonstrating its support for it.

Councillor Lidia Arciszewska proposed accepting the recommendations of the report.

Councillor Graham seconded the proposal and noted that the work was important in enabling the management and monitoring of biodiverse areas in order that residents felt reassured that this was being done correctly and strategies could be adapted if they were not suitable.

This was voted on and approved unanimously.

RESOLVED:

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That the Executive:

- I. Endorse the Oxfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy for publication by Oxfordshire County Council.

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Quarterly Finance Review Q1

Councillor Alaric Smith, Executive Member for Finance, introduced the item, the purpose of which was to detail the Council's financial performance for Quarter One 2025-2026.

Councillor Smith advised that:

- At quarter 1 there was an overall underspend of £260,745 against a profiled budget for the period. Key factors driving this position were: additional income from Trade Waste; the Leisure Contract; vacant posts and better than expected performance in respect of the materials recycling contract.
- Budget setting for 2025/26 had reduced the base budget for recycling by £300,000, however despite this, in quarter 1 the contract was £25,000 underspent.
- Income from Trade Waste was £164,000 above target but this was partially offset by expenditure on bins and boxes.
- There had been vacant positions in Legal and Conservation that had resulted in a combined underspend on employee costs of approximately £50,000. Officers were now in place in those areas and so these savings would now end.
- The leisure contract was £41,000 ahead of budget, so was performing better than expected
- The Governments consultation on Fairer Funding Review and Business Rates Reset had ended and final proposals from MHCLG were expected by the end of October. West Oxfordshire would be subject to a cash cut as it was not subject to a funding guarantee. This had been modelled in the Councils medium term financial strategy which would be further updated when more detail emerged.

Councillor Smith proposed accepting the recommendations of the report.

Councillor Graham seconded the proposal.

This was voted on and approved unanimously.

RESOLVED:

That the Executive:

- I. Noted the Council's Financial Performance for Quarter One 2025-2026.

Quarterly Service Review Q1

Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, introduced the item, the purpose of which was to provide details of the Council's operational performance at the end of 2025-26 Quarter One (Q1).

Councillor Graham made the following points:

- Service Performance in all areas had remained broadly positive.
- Areas that were above target included: the percentage of Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates collected; Leisure centre visits and gym memberships and number of affordable houses delivered.
- Customer satisfaction was above target at 98.21%, however Councillor Graham reassured those present that, while this was positive, where there were issues the Council would respond and communicate quickly.
- Service areas below target could be seen in section 3.3 of the report. It was noted that household waste recycling was below target but this reflected seasonal factors and a national trend. With regard to Planning Appeals Allowed, the granular detail revealed that this related to single figures of appeals.

Councillor Graham proposed accepting the recommendations of the report.

Councillor Duncan Enright, Deputy Leader, seconded the proposal and noted that West Oxfordshire had scored well in recent leagues tables on action for climate change and as a district to set up a business.

This was voted on and approved unanimously.

RESOLVED:

That the Executive:

- I. Noted the 2025/26 Q1 service performance report.

3 year Service Level Agreements - Year 1 reporting and future funding options

Councillor Rachel Crouch, Executive Member for Stronger, Healthy Communities, introduced the item, the purpose which was to provide a summary of the performance at the end of Year 1 of all 7 organisations receiving grant funding. In addition the purpose was to consider the Council's appetite for offering future multi-year funding once the current arrangement comes to an end in March 2027.

Councillor Crouch raised the following points:

- The multi-year Service Level Agreements had been awarded in March 2024 to seven organisations, with combined value of £553,500 over three years.
- Highlights from the reports submitted by the organisations could be seen at section 3.2 of the report and these were briefly outlined by Councillor Crouch. These highlights clearly showed the great work that had been done because of the funding.
- The report sought to explore if this work should be continued beyond the 2027 arrangement.

Councillor Crouch proposed accepting the recommendations of the report.

Councillor Alaric Smith seconded the proposal and noted the timing of this report was important to ensure such support did not cease with LGR.

This was voted on and approved unanimously.

RESOLVED:

That the Executive:

1. Delegate authority to the Director of Place, in consultation with the Executive Member for Stronger Healthy Communities, to explore the feasibility of securing a legacy position for the Voluntary and Community Sector in this year's budget setting round to continue to offer a multi-year funding arrangement from 2027-2030.

Public Toilet Review

Councillor Andy Graham advised the public that if items 15, 16 and 17 required the Executive to discuss the exempt annexes to the report that there would be a requirement to exclude the press and public from the meeting.

Councillor Lidia Arciszewska, Executive Member for Environment, introduced the item, the purpose of which was to consider current provision of public conveniences in each location, costs, income and building condition. The aim was to provide a balance between the continued provision of good quality public toilet facilities, protect essential facilities into the future and to reduce the financial burden on the Council.

In her presentation Councillor Arciszewska made the following points:

- The Council managed thirteen public conveniences across the district, which had a cost of £270,000.

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- Officers had worked to establish the patterns of use of the facilities and as a result sought to establish if the maintenance and provision of the facilities was money well spent.
- An asset assessment exercise had been to establish the state of repair of the facilities.
- The result of the work so far was that the conveniences had been placed into categories and the Council now sought to investigate how these should be managed into the future. The Council wished to engage with Town and Parish Councils in nine localities to establish if there was an appetite for them to take the facilities over.

Other Members in attendance, not part of the executive stated;

- There was a need for Town and Parish Councils to understand what the consequences of refusing to take on the facilities would be. In response Councillor Graham suggested that the detail of this would be part of the discussion with Town and Parish Councils and that any decisions would be the subject of a further report and scrutiny.
- Queried if there was a distinction made between disabled and non-disabled facilities. Councillor Graham advised that Officers would be asked to consider this.

Councillor Enright drew the meetings attention to the consideration given in the report by Officers to the locations that had alternative facilities, such as The Leys in Witney.

Councillor David Melvin asked the Executive Members to confirm that facilities at Kilkenny Country Park would remain open. This was confirmed by the Executive Member.

Councillor Arciszewska proposed accepting the recommendations of the report.

Councillor Graham seconded the proposal and noted that there would be a further detailed report but that this decision was timely with respect to LGR in order to invest before such a transition.

This was voted on and approved unanimously.

RESOLVED:

That the Executive:

1. Agree to work with Town and Parish Councils and the Public Convenience Task and Finish Group to explore the options in regards to transferring these assets where possible, either on long leases or freehold, as detailed in the report.

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2. Delegate authority for the terms of any disposals arising from recommendation 1 to the Director of Finance in consultation with the Executive Member for Finance.
3. Agree that, where transfer cannot be achieved, to retain facilities at Langdale Gate in Witney, Guildenford and High Street in Burford, Bampton Town Hall, New Street in Chipping Norton, Hensington Road in Woodstock and Kilkenny Country Park, and to bring forward a further report regarding the repairs and improvements required to ensure good quality facilities are provided.
4. Agree, where transfer cannot be achieved, to terminate leases at the Town Hall in Chipping Norton and Charlbury, noting the lease implications set out in Annex D to the report.
5. Agree, where transfer cannot be achieved, to close facilities at The Leys, Witney, Browns Lane, Woodstock, Back Lane, Eynsham, Black Bourton Road in Carterton which are in the Council's ownership and consider options such as conversion, lease or sale of the buildings.

387 Review of the Ubico Shareholder Agreement & Ubico Board Member Appointments

Councillor Andy Graham, The Leader of the Council, introduced the item, the purpose of which was to seek approval to agree a new UBICO Shareholder Agreement and Ubico Board Member Appointments.

Councillor Graham proposed accepting the recommendations of the report.

Councillor Enright seconded the proposal.

This was voted on and approved unanimously.

RESOLVED:

That the Executive:

1. Approve the termination of the shareholders' agreement between the following local authority shareholders:
 - a. West Oxfordshire District Council
 - b. Cheltenham Borough Council
 - c. Cotswold District Council
 - d. Forest of Dean District Council
 - e. Stroud District Council
 - f. Tewkesbury Borough Council
 - g. Gloucester City Council; and
 - h. Ubico Ltd

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that was entered into in January 2020 (the “2020 Shareholders’ Agreement”).

2. Approve the proposal described in this report to enter into a replacement Shareholders’ Agreement between the above parties in the form set out in exempt Annexe B to this report.
3. Approve the proposal described in Exempt Annex D to this report in relation to the number of votes for each shareholder, further amending the agreement set out in Exempt Annex B.

388 Decision Taken Under Urgency Powers: Ubico Growth Request

Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, introduced the item, the purpose of which was to report to the Executive on a decision taken by the Chief Executive Officer under urgency powers. Councillor Graham expanded on how a requirement for such a decision may have arisen.

Giles Hughes, Chief Executive Officer, explained the circumstance in which the decision had arose. There had been a proposal for a further Authority to join Ubico. This required agreement by all shareholders that included the Council. The timescales for the decision to be made had meant that it had not been possible to bring the decision to the Executive.

Councillor Graham proposed accepting the recommendations of the report.

Councillor Enright seconded the proposal.

This was voted on and approved unanimously.

RESOLVED:

That the Executive:

- I. Note the decision taken as set out in Annex A.

389 Exclusion of Press and Public

The item was not considered at the meeting.

390 Exempt Annex D for Item 15 - Public Toilet Review

This was not discussed, as the item was dealt with in the open part of the meeting without reference to the exempt material.

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391 Exempt Annexes B, C and D for Item 16 - Review of the Ubico Shareholder Agreement & Ubico Board Member Appointments

This was not discussed, as the item was dealt with in the open part of the meeting without reference to the exempt material.

392 Exempt Annex B for Item 17 - Decision Taken Under Urgency Powers: Ubico Growth Request

This was not discussed, as the item was dealt with in the open part of the meeting without reference to the exempt material..

The Meeting closed at 3.08 pm

CHAIR